

# What's *our* potential?

# What's *my* part?

## Generosity without guilt or gimmicks

Giving to God's work on earth should be one of the most joyous acts we can imagine.

Think about it—the God of the universe, the Creator of all that is, wants to partner with me, using my meager donations to help redeem this fallen world and make it more like it was meant to be. *Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on Earth...*

But too often, *generosity* and *giving* have become dirty words. We've learned to stay at home when the preacher's going to talk about the church budget, because it is bound to turn into a guilt trip. Or else we've seen far too much of what sounds like snake-oil-salesmanship: "Give to *my* ministry, and God will give you everything you've ever wanted!"

As we look over all that God has called this congregation to do, and at the practical resources it will take to get it done, we simply ask you to read this brochure and pray, "God, what would you have me do?" Listen, and respond as God leads you. *No guilt, no gimmicks.*

Inside this brochure:

- **Why is financial generosity important for me?**
- **With so many good causes competing for my dollars, why should I give to Jesus MCC?**
- **How much do we need from each person to fulfill our mission?**
- **How does Jesus MCC's budget compare to other churches?**
- **What do other people give to our church?**
- **What about tithing?**
- **Self-assessment tools.**



## Why is financial generosity important?

In the Gospels, Jesus repeatedly returns to the subject of generosity, speaking about giving more than any subject except salvation. Clearly, Jesus believed that learning to give generously is *essential to healthy spiritual living*. Jesus criticized those who give what is convenient, while praising those who stretch themselves. *Luke 21:1-4*.

So why is giving important? When we give sacrificially, we are becoming more like Jesus, giving of ourselves so that others may live. We are declaring that God's kingdom is so important that we want to invest a meaningful part of our income in it.

Next to God, money may be the most powerful force in the world. Think about it. Money comes closer than any other earthly thing in offering us security, status, health, and pleasure. That's why it's so easy to be tempted to cling to money, rather than God. When we get serious about radical sharing as a way of life, we are declaring that we are not captive to money—in God we trust.

Do you want to break through to even deeper levels of spiritual living?

## With so many good causes competing for my dollars, why should I give to Jesus MCC?

Exciting things are happening at Jesus MCC!

For some reason, God has chosen to raise up Jesus MCC to become the largest Metropolitan Community Church anywhere in Middle America. We have grown from 45 to almost 450 in the past eleven years, making us the fastest growing MCC in the world.

But more important than mere *numerical* growth is *spiritual* growth. Every week, we hear from people within our congregation and from across the globe (who access our website or read our book) whose lives are being transformed by the ministry of this congregation. People say things like: "I'm back in church for the first time in years. I'm learning more about the Bible than ever before. I've discovered that God wants to have a relationship with me! I crave Sundays now! When I walked into

this church, I could feel the presence of God!"

And God keeps giving us ever more remarkable ways to reach out:

### Three powerful worship services each Sunday.

These inclusive, Christ-centered services have been the catalyst for many to reconnect to God and their spiritual selves.

**Webcasting our worship services.** We're able to minister to isolated people across the globe who now hear a message of hope!

**SoulShift Program.** We've created a model program for making disciples that is being shared with other MCCs globally.

**Found Pearl Press.** Our fledgling publishing ministry produces Christian resources for the LGBTQ community and beyond. In the pipeline are a Spanish translation of *The Children Are Free*, printing and distributing *The Children Are Free* in Africa, and sermon CD collections with study guides to support gay and lesbian couples.

**Worldwide Community Connections.** The Missions Board is leading as we build enduring connections with care-giving ministries (to the Navajo Nation, to Africa, or elsewhere) that lift people out of grinding poverty.

**Would Jesus Discriminate?** Jesus MCC has piloted a model outreach campaign that uses billboards, yard signs, t-shirts and bumper stickers to challenge Christians to re-think their anti-GLBT prejudice. Our program will go national throughout MCC in the fall of 2008!

These are just a few of the ways God is already using us—little ol' us—to share the Good News with the world. We are on the verge of something extraordinary!

## How much do we need from each person to fulfill our mission?

Jesus MCC's 2008 budget, which the congregation unanimously approved in January, begins with a "base budget" of \$8,435 per week. This amount will allow us to maintain the status quo—but not expand. The approved budget includes six steps,

tied to specific areas of growth in ministry, that increase up to **\$10,121** per week. A copy of the budget is available at the “What’s our potential?” display.

Sunday attendance currently averages **440**. If you subtract from the “givers pool” children, guests, and those who have been attending only a short time, there are about **380** people in the congregation with the capacity to support our work together with regular giving. The base budget would require **\$22.19 per week** from the average giver. To fully fund our 2008 budget would require **\$26.63** per person.

### How does Jesus MCC’s budget compare to other churches?

To keep these numbers in perspective, the most reliable source for church data (*The Church Law & Tax Report*) indicates that the average U.S. church our size has annual weekly giving of \$14,082. Our current average weekly giving is **41% less** than that.

And that’s a problem. We’re an active, thriving congregation, but amazing opportunities often lag behind because critical programs go unfunded, we lack enough staff, and existing staff are substantially underpaid.

This dramatically hinders our ability to achieve the vision God has given us. Imagine how much more we could be doing if we just achieved average giving!

### What do other people give to our church?

The chart below shows how current giving is distributed across the congregation. Which bracket are you in? Which one do you feel called to?

Weekly Giving	Number of People
\$10 to \$25	74
\$25 to \$50	43
\$50 to \$100	33
\$100 to \$200	8
>\$200	3

The point of this chart is *not* that all people are called to give more. Christian giving is about *generosity*, which is proportional to income. Jesus gave his highest praise to the poor widow, who

gave only two pennies. God knows your circumstances—it’s all about what God has called *you* to do, and what is generous *for you*.

### What about tithing?

*Tithing* means giving 10% of our income to God’s work. Contrary to what you may have heard in the past, tithing is not a “commandment”—the Christian faith is not legalistic.

While it’s not commanded, people of faith—from the time of Abraham and Sarah forward—have used the spiritual discipline of tithing as a way of **stretching their faith and generosity**.

When Jesus spoke about financial resources, he often went far beyond a tithe in challenging people in their generosity. For example:

- After Zacchaeus’ encounter with Jesus, he gave half of all his possessions to the poor. *Luke 19:1-10*
- Jesus praised the poor widow, who gave everything she owned to God’s work. *Luke 21:1-4*
- Jesus told the rich young ruler that to have eternal life, he should give away everything he owns. *Luke 18:18-23*

That’s pretty stern stuff. Most of us are probably not ready to give away all—or even half—of what we own. **For most of us, giving 10% would require a real step of faith.** But God promises to bless those who are generous: “Bring the full tithe into my storehouse..., and see if I will not open the windows of heaven and pour down for you an overflowing blessing.” *Malachi 3:10*

If you would like to challenge yourself to grow in your generosity, we offer **The Great 10% Challenge**—an intentional path toward tithing. Prayerfully consider becoming a part. The 10% Challenge worksheet is part of the optional response form on the last page of this brochure.

**See page four for a  
Generosity Assessment Worksheet  
and optional Response Form. ►**

## How does my giving to God's work compare to my other spending?

This worksheet was a supplement to the sermon *Shaping My Destiny*, given January 13, 2008 by Pastor Jeff. You can listen or watch at [www.JesusMCC.org/listen](http://www.JesusMCC.org/listen)

There is no fixed formula for assessing generosity, but here are a few questions that may help:

### How much do I spend each month on the following?

#### My Vehicle

Car payment \_\_\_\_\_  
Maintenance/repair + \_\_\_\_\_  
Gasoline + \_\_\_\_\_  
Total = \_\_\_\_\_

#### Technology

Cell phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Internet + \_\_\_\_\_  
Cable/Satellite TV + \_\_\_\_\_  
Total = \_\_\_\_\_

#### Entertainment

Eating out \_\_\_\_\_  
Music + \_\_\_\_\_  
Movies + \_\_\_\_\_  
Hobbies + \_\_\_\_\_  
Total = \_\_\_\_\_

How much do I typically spend on vacations annually? Estimate = \_\_\_\_\_

### How much do I typically invest in God's work each month?

Giving through my church \_\_\_\_\_  
Giving through other charities + \_\_\_\_\_  
Giving directly to hurting people + \_\_\_\_\_  
Total = \_\_\_\_\_

Is this level of giving consistent with the abundance that I hope will be reflected back into my own life?

Yes  No  Not sure

If I tithed, how much would I give to God's work each month? *Tithing means giving 10% of our income. This is an ancient biblical practice that many people of faith have used to grow their generosity.*

Current monthly income \_\_\_\_\_ x .10 = \_\_\_\_\_

## My Response

If you feel moved to respond, please fill out and return this form. A pledge of this type can help *intentions* become *reality*. It also helps the Board of Directors as they look forward and plan for the future.

For reasons of privacy, we are not asking anyone to provide actual giving numbers. Simply fill out this general form as a statement of faith, then return it in the offering plate, in the basket at the info kiosk, or mail it to:

Treasurer, Jesus MCC  
2950 East 55th Place  
Indianapolis, IN 46220

My Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Today's Date \_\_\_\_\_

Check the one that applies:

- At this time, I don't feel led to use tithing as a benchmark.** For me, at this time, generosity means giving \$\_\_\_\_\_ per week or \$\_\_\_\_\_ per month.
- I am ready to become a tither;** I'm going to take this step of faith!
- I am already tithing** to Jesus MCC and will continue.
- I am already tithing, but want to **take an additional step** of faith by increasing my giving by another \_\_\_\_%.
- I am not in a position to tithe right now, but **I'm going to get serious about getting there.** Starting now, I'm going to increase my giving to:  2.5% of income  5.0% of income  7.5% of income. And keep increasing by 2.5% each year in stair-step fashion until I hit 10%!

If you would like to give electronically, pick up an **Electronic Giving Form** at the display. If you would like to give each week in the offering plate, feel free to pick up a box of **offering envelopes** at the display.

Thank you! May God bless you in this big step of faith! We will mail you periodic updates about how our giving program is going and all the wonderful things that result!